

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

A Verse by Verse Study

by

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CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Babylon the Great, Mother of Harlots; The Last Form of Gentile World-Power

Revelation 17:1-7:

- 1. And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters:**
- 2. With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.**
- 3. So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.**
- 4. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:**
- 5. And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.**
- 6. And I saw the woman drunken with the Blood of the saints, and with the Blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.**
- 7. And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.**

The fall of Babylon was announced in Revelation chapter 14. Under the seventh vial the judgment of that guilty system takes place. The events in Revelation 14:8 through the remainder of the chapter take place AFTER the pouring out of the seventh vial. This is an important help in proper understanding of the various parts and visions of the book.

The character of Babylon, her relationship to the Beast and to the kings of the earth in general, together with details of her judgment are then unfolded in the two following chapters (17 and 18). It must not be supposed that the subject matter of these chapters follows on from the seventh vial. The account is not consecutive.

The subject of Babylon is of great importance and plays a prominent part in Revelation. To understand who and what Babylon is, we will adhere strictly to the Word of God, and pay no attention to what we have heard by way of man. Join me here in earnest prayer that the Holy Spirit will be our guide as we proceed.

The devil is a “master counterfeiter.” For everything God has that is good, the devil has a counterfeit.

There is the Trinity of God: Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Satan has his trinity: the Dragon, the Antichrist, the False Prophet. God calls and ordains preachers . . . so does the devil (II Corinthians 11:13-15).

There are two women in Revelation: One righteous - the mother of righteousness and purity (Revelation 12) - about whom we have already studied; the other unrighteous - the mother of harlots and abominations (Revelation 17). One - of God; the other - of Satan.

By making comparisons and by reasoning, we will find out who this woman is, in Revelation 17:

Both women mentioned above are mothers: The first brought forth a Son, who is to rule all nations. The second is the mother of harlots.

Both women are splendidly dressed: The first was wearing heavenly garments, “**clothed with the sun**”; her clothing is “**light**” from Heaven. The second woman is “**arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, decked with gold and precious stones, and pearls.**” Her clothes and jewels are all earthly, and from the earth.

The first woman has the moon (the power of darkness) under her feet. The second woman “**hath rule**” Over the kings of the earth.

Both mothers suffer: The first battles with the dragon to save her child from being devoured. The dragon pursues her and drives her into the wilderness. The second woman suffers at the hands of the ten kings who supported her, but who now make her naked, desolate, eat her flesh and burn her with fire, while God in all His power and fury judges her and visits her with plagues, death, and utter destruction.

Both women fill a great place in world affairs: One pure, the other a harlot; one hated by earth’s powers, the other loved!

- One produces masculine nobility - the other produces feminine impurity.
- One is helped by celestial wings - the other is carried by dragon power.
- One has upon her head a crown of twelve stars - the other has upon her head the name of the destroyer, and is drunk with the blood of saints and prophets.
- One finally takes up her abode in the heavenly city surrounded by all saints of all ages. The other suddenly goes down to eternal ruin in the hot wrath of Almighty God.

These two women are rivals in every respect, and are just as opposite in character as day and night. The first woman we have already identified. Chapter 12 gives the picture of Israel bringing forth the Man Child. “**Salvation is of the Jews.**” Jesus came forth out of Israel.

We will now identify the second woman, “**the mother of harlots**”:

The outstanding thing said about her is that she is a harlot . . . **“the Great Harlot.”** She advertises her harlotry by wearing on her head the name **“Mother of Harlots”!** In the Word of God, harlotry stands for “debauched worship - idolatry - false devotion.” When people worship as God that which is not God, but a god of their own making; when people give their hearts to idols; when they set up systems, doctrines, rites and rituals to replace what God has commanded and revealed in His Word, in Scripture, that is called whoredom, adultery, fornication. Read carefully Jeremiah 3:6, 8, 9; Ezekiel 16:32; Hosea 1 and 2; Revelation 2:22.

When God’s divine laws and ordinances are broken down, the sacredness of marriage and morals goes with it. Some religions on earth today are hotbeds of immorality. The law of God, the first and greatest commandment, Jesus said, is to **“love the Lord with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength”** (Mark 12:29,30). To bestow such honor on a god of our own making is spiritual harlotry!

This woman in Revelation 17 has turned the hearts of kings and multitudes of kings’ subjects to gods other than Jehovah God and Christ Jesus. She is the mother of every “ism” and false religion that has been born since Cain thought he could satisfy God with an offering of his own choosing. That takes in every church, religion and cult that does not give Jesus Christ and His verbally inspired Word pre-eminence in every detail of worship.

This scarlet-clad female is **“THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF EARTH.”** That dates back a long way. She conceived and gave birth to the first spiritual adulterer. She is the mother of them all, just as Israel (nationally speaking) is the mother of our Lord and Saviour.

When and where did the **“mother of harlots”** begin? We read in the tenth and eleventh chapters of Genesis that the beginning of the kingdom of Nimrod, the grandson of Ham, was Babel . . . or “Babylon.” It was in the land of Shinar where the people of earth dwelt and **“were all of one speech.”** The Scriptures imply that these people all came together under the leadership of Nimrod - which name means *“rebellious panther.”* That is exactly what he was . . . he was a forerunner of the Antichrist. At his suggestion and under his leadership the people determined to build a city and a tower to reach up into Heaven . . . into God’s house, if you please! They intended to get to Heaven in their own way and by the labors of their own hands.

Bible history tells us that Nimrod was a mighty organizer. He enslaved the people and made them work for him for mere bread. He was the first earthly king; he founded “king craft” and tyranny. He said he saw a golden crown in the sky, he had one made like it, and he wore it - setting himself up as a form of deity. Without a doubt, many worshipped him as God. The Bible tells us that the people who were going to build a tower into Heaven wanted to **“make a name for themselves.”** They wanted to be independent of God.

They wanted to organize and become one, never to be separated and scattered over the face of the earth. Read carefully Jeremiah 13:11; 33:9; Ezekiel 39:13 and Zephaniah 3:20. History goes further to say that Nimrod made a great statue of his wife, Semiramis, and set it up in the capital of his empire. That capital was “Bab-el,” or our word Babylon.

The word Babel means “*gate to god*” . . . not the true God of Heaven and earth, but Nimrod’s image-god.

It was a denial of God’s way to Heaven and a denial of salvation by grace. No doubt this was the beginning of image worship. It is possible that the image of Nimrod’s wife was the first image of a woman to be set up in a temple for worship.

Nimrod was a Heaven-defying founder of a new religion, bypassing the true God of Heaven. It is a mistake to think that idolatry was the gradual outgrowth of well-disposed but unenlightened human thinking. Idol worshippers came into prominence suddenly. Idolatry was born in intentional rebellion against God. It was born in the heart of the forerunner of the false messiah, Antichrist.

God stopped the city, stopped the building of the tower, scattered the people to the four corners of the earth and brought about a confusion of tongues; but the people did not forget the idol worship Nimrod had taught them. Godless forms and rituals have been handed down through the ages, and the most remote tribe on earth has its idol. They worship the sun, the moon, trees, snakes, cows . . . “**the abominations of earth.**”

Even in nominally Christian America the influence of idol worship is reflected in the images seen on dashboards of automobiles, in jewelry worn today, and even in contemporary art and modern music.

The nations were “**drunk with the wine of her fornication.**” What is the wine of fornication? The wine of Babylon, “**mother of harlots,**” is none other than her debauching system of idol worship and carnal system of self-exaltation against God. Read carefully I Corinthians 1:26-31.

By actual recorded fact, more than two-thirds of earth’s population today are worshippers of idols. The spirit of Nimrod and Babylon is still living. The space program to reach the moon and bypass God to reach Heaven is the same spirit as that of Nimrod.

All the governments of earth today lean more to the spirit of Babylonianism (which represents everything opposed to God), than toward the Spirit of God. Earth’s governments will license men to sell products and indulge in business that will damn souls by the million. The spirit of Babel which symbolizes a political-religious system will be here until King Jesus puts it down forever. What about YOU, dear reader of this message?

Where will you be when the Scarlet Woman rides out? Will you be in Heaven with Jesus, on earth with Antichrist, or in hell with the screaming millions of the damned? It all depends upon whether you accept or reject the Lord Jesus. Read John 1:11-13; John 3:18; Hebrews 2:4; Romans 10:9, 10, 13.

Be saved ere it is too late, if you are not already saved. If you ARE saved, praise God for saving your soul!

THE LAST FORM OF GENTILE WORLD-POWER

Revelation 17:8-18

8. **The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.**
9. **And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.**
10. **And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.**
11. **And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.**
12. **And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.**
13. **These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.**
14. **These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.**
15. **And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.**
16. **And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.**
17. **For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.**
18. **And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.**

We found the following to be true of the Scarlet Woman:

1. She was marked by harlotry.
2. She was the mother of harlots and abominations.
3. She was born under Nimrod and ancient Babylon.
4. She made earth drunk with the wine of her fornication.

Now, in verse 6, the woman also is drunk . . . drunk on blood! Drunken from the Blood of saints and martyrs . . . witnesses of Jesus Christ. This definitely dates the woman back to the days of the prophets. She is no modern system or set-up. She was when the prophets were, and she shed their blood. She is responsible for every martyred prophet and saint down through the ages.

This woman is not pagan Rome alone. Millions of saints died a martyr's death before the days of pagan and political Rome. Rome is included, to be sure, but much more than Rome is included. Wherever believers suffer for their faith in Jesus Christ and are persecuted for that faith - many times even unto death - there the harlot of Revelation 17 is still living and operating against the Lord God, whether it be in pagan Rome, or among Jews, Catholics, Mohammedans . . . or a score of others which space will not allow us to name here.

This mother of harlots is sitting upon “**many waters . . . the waters are peoples, and multitudes, and tongues, and nations.**” This statement clearly shows that the teaching and harlotry of this woman are universal. You cannot find one tribe on earth today that does not have its religion and its gods. You may go to the darkest jungle and find there the influence of paganism and idol worship!

The woman was not only sitting upon many peoples - she was also riding upon a scarlet Beast full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

This is the same Beast seen in Revelation chapter 13. This Beast which John saw . . . was . . . is not . . . shall rise out of the abyss . . . then go into perdition! The people of earth wonder at the sight. The Beast is the ancient beastly Roman Empire, which was at its height when Jesus was born, and stood until 476 A. D. In John’s day it had been (Rome was born in 753 B. C.) and it was then existing. Since 476 A. D. Rome has not been a world power; but it will come into power immediately after the Rapture. It will be a ten-kingdom federation under the leadership of the Beast, and all the world will wonder at the giant kingdom. But it will go into utter destruction under the hand of judgment of the Lamb of God. Verse 8 describes past and future Rome - in spirit and in reality.

Verse 9 tells us that the seven heads are seven mountains. This certainly pictures the seven-hilled city of Rome, here indicated as the center of the woman’s almost universal authority and influence. This is where the Papacy has been located and where it has flourished for 1500 years.

Verse 10 says, “**And there are seven kings. FIVE ARE FALLEN, AND ONE IS, and the other is yet to come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.**” These seven kings mean different forms of government of the Roman Empire. Five are fallen (which are past forms of government). But in John’s day the empire had the imperial form of government which is the “**one that is.**” The one that “**is not yet but is to come**” is the final form of the revived Roman Empire.

Verses 12 and 13: “**And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the Beast. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the Beast.**”

These ten horns refer to ten royal persons. The term “**horn**” signifies power (Revelation 17:6; Lamentations 2:3), and here refers to kings. There will be ten kingdoms and ten kings who receive authority “**one hour with the Beast.**” (That phrase, “**receive authority one hour with the Beast**” signifies that they all receive power at the same time.

They will exist together. It does not mean that they will reign for only sixty minutes; but during the course of one hour the ten-kingdom federation is set up, is fully united and agreed.) When the Beast reappears on the scene of action he will appear in a ten-kingdom federation.

The Roman Empire crumbled in A. D. 476, but will be revived in a day unknown to man. This revived empire will consist of ten kingdoms with individual chiefs.

The duration of the reign of these ten kings will be determined by the reign of the Beast. When HE is destroyed THEY will be destroyed with him . . . they are kings in name only, for they willingly place themselves in absolute subjection to the Beast. They will have one mind, and will be dominated by the diabolical power of the Beast, who will be the very power of Satan wrapped up in flesh.

These ten kings will be no more than puppets, completely controlled by the Beast. We see much of this going on in the world today, in Russia, China, and the places where Communism is in power, and all of this is the spirit which is a forerunner of the Man of Sin, the last world dictator.

Verse 14: **“These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.”** We have recorded here the final public act of the Beast with his puppets and allies. The great battle is fully described in Revelation 19:19-21.

We will study this passage more fully a bit later on. The angel here gives only the fact of the battle, passing over many outstanding intervening events - that is, the battle is just announced here; the war has not actually been entered into. The outcome is settled: **“The Lamb shall overcome them.”**

Complete victory is guaranteed before the conflict begins.

The Mighty Conqueror is King of all who reign, and Lord of all who exercise authority upon this earth. No power is allowed except by God’s permission. God is supreme; He is sovereign; all power in Heaven and in earth is His (Matthew 28:18). How silly, how foolish, for men and governments to enter into war against God’s Lamb and Almighty God. Read the second Psalm in its entirety. One day the Lord God Almighty will laugh at the enemies of righteousness when they are completely put down, once for all forever.

But who are **“they that are with Him”** in verse 14?

They are the host of heavenly armies, made up of all the redeemed in Heaven at that time. There will be other companies of saved persons in Heaven besides the Church (Hebrews 12:23), and when Jesus appears in the sky riding a great white horse, the whole body of heavenly saints will accompany their Lord. The armies will descend to crush earth’s ungodly hordes of the enemies of the Lamb of God.

“The earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof . . . The meek shall inherit the earth.”

God did not create this earth to be populated by Satan and his emissaries. When final war is declared, all the saints will ride out with Jesus, on white horses. Read carefully concerning this universal gathering of heavenly saints (Jude 14; Zechariah 14:5; Revelation 19:14). Angels have their part in the heavenly conflict (Revelation 12:7), but the saints of God alone will form the conquering army of the Lamb of God . . . the army that will completely annihilate the Antichrist and his armies.

Those who take part in this gigantic conflict and who are led by the Lamb of God are spoken of as **“called, chosen, faithful.”** They are those who were called in time (I Timothy 1:9), chosen in eternity (Ephesians 1:4), and proved faithful in all and every relation of life and many of them faithful even unto death (Matthew 25:21-23; Revelation 2:10). Such terms as **“called, chosen, and faithful”** can apply only to redeemed saints.

Verse 15: **“And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.”**

In verse 3, the woman sits upon the Beast. In verse 1 the harlot sits upon many waters. Here we have the explanation of **“many waters”** and this explanation helps us to better understand the immense and universal influence the apostate church will then exercise over the people of the entire earth. The nations and people - seven outside the Roman world - will be ensnared, captivated and allured by the harlot. She sits on a throne, demonstrating greatness, richly adorned with the glories of the world, but without the affections of her deluded followers. There will be much display of loyalty, but no real loyalty of the heart.

This one advertises herself as the true church, and through her favors and smile she leads millions into everlasting ruin and destruction, which was her one aim in the beginning. Her supreme desire will be for gold (Revelation 18:12). Her least concern is for the souls of men (Revelation 18:13). I believe you will agree that Rome is courting the world today. In this hour concessions are being made by Rome that have not been made for centuries.

Protestants are no longer called heretics - but “brethren who have erred from the faith.” (Another book could be written here, but time and space will not permit.) You mark it well: Rome has never changed at heart. There have been many outward changes (man looks on the outward appearance, God looks on the heart); but Rome has the same heart today that she has always had - and always will have until completely destroyed by the Lamb of God.

Verses 16-17: **“And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the Beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh and burn her with fire. For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil His will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the Beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.”**

Perhaps you did not fully understand in the previous verse when I stated that millions will follow the woman outwardly, but not from the heart. God will put it into the hearts of these people to fulfill His plan and program in the destruction of apostate religion. The woman is the head of all apostasy in that particular hour, and is now hated by the ten horns and the Beast. What a change!

It is clear that the Beast and the kings will exist after the destruction of Babylon. The Beast and the ten horns (kings) are the human instruments used by Almighty God to inflict vengeance on them who operate the guilty, bloody apostate system. (The secular power is reserved for destruction at the hands of the Lord God Almighty in person at His coming in power and great glory - chapter 19.) The ten horns (kings) will act in conjunction with the Beast in that they, along with him, hate the whore.

You remember when they were given position of chiefs, they had no mind of their own - they were surrendered to the will of the Beast - soul, spirit, mind and body. All will unite in supporting the Beast in his destruction of the woman. The world's glory, the world's might, and the world's power is but a passing fancy, a passing dream. **“Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it.”** Except the Lord build the city, they build in vain. All that is not founded and grounded upon God, fades and perishes. That will be true in that hour. At that time, Babylon will be flourishing on the highest pinnacle of pride and greatness the world has ever known. She will be at her zenith of power and glory, but she will be completely cut down. Her ruin and destruction will be complete and final. In righteous judgment her system and her peoples will be destroyed. The one thing I do not want you to miss is the fact that her partners in crime and blood when she was destroying the saints wholesale, become the instruments of her political overthrow and of her complete downfall!

First - the harlot will be hated. This refers to the kings and great men, and to the peoples who loved her and worshipped at her feet in lust. Now they loathe and despise her!

Second - the harlot will be made desolate. Her wealth and everything physical that she possesses will be utterly destroyed and wasted (chapter 18:10).

Third - the harlot will be made naked. She will be stripped of her purple royal robes - and will appear before the masses (many waters) as the abandoned woman that she is, in her true character and shame (Ezekiel 23:29; Revelation 3:18). Her moral nakedness and shame will appear before all!

Fourth - her enemies will “eat her flesh”. The abundance of her wealth, her riches, all that she gloried in, will be devoured by her late admirers who have now become her bitterest enemies (James 5:3; Psalm 27:2; Micah 3:2,3).

Fifth - the harlot will be burned with fire. This denotes social and political ruin. The main element used by Almighty God in the destruction of literal Babylon was water - not fire. (Read all of Jeremiah 51.) The Babylon we are now studying (the mystical city) shall be utterly “burned with fire” (Revelation 18:8). Both Babylons are doomed to everlasting desolation and destruction.

One has fallen; the other is sure to fall! The powers that will destroy Babylon pour out their vengeance and fury on the guilty system under which they have so long been enslaved. Here the veil is pushed back. We learn that regardless of what these powers thought they were doing, they were simply carrying out divine orders and fulfilling God's divine will. God decreed the destruction of the worst system ever to exist upon the face of the earth, and the Beast and his puppet kings are God's instruments in destroying His greatest enemy: **“God hath put in their hearts to do His will!”**

Note - **“their hearts”** and **“His will.”** These ten kings heartily enter into their work of destruction. Not knowing what they are doing, they will fulfill and accomplish the purpose of Almighty God.

The hearts and minds of the destroying kings led by the Beast will be fully united. They will love the service to which they are appointed. They will be divinely set apart for the purpose of executing a fixed determination and a fixed judgment. I am sure such a statement is not readily accepted by all, but as proof of what I have just said, let me remind you that God raised up Pharaoh, hardened his heart - and destroyed him!

“What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For He saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. FOR THE SCRIPTURE SAITH UNTO PHARAOH, EVEN FOR THIS SAME PURPOSE HAVE I RAISED THEE UP, THAT I MIGHT SHEW MY POWER IN THEE, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE DECLARED THROUGHOUT ALL THE EARTH. Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth He yet find fault? For who hath resisted His will? NAY BUT, O MAN, WHO ART THOU THAT REPLIEST AGAINST God? SHALL THE THING FORMED SAY TO HIM THAT FORMED IT, WHY HAST THOU MADE ME THUS?” (Romans 9:14-20).

The ten kings **“give their kingdoms to the Beast until the words of God shall be fulfilled.”** The ten kings will be in absolute subjection to the Beast. There are ten but they are coexistent with the reign of the Beast.

They voluntarily place themselves, their kingdoms, and their rule, into the hands and under the rule of the Beast, who becomes their master, allowing them but a shadow of royalty. They are only instruments in his hands. The real power of that day will be in the hands of the Beast (Revelation 13:2-7).

The ten kings had previously given their power to the woman but now when the Beast turns on the woman, so do the ten kings. They then are in perfect submission to him.

“God works in mysterious ways, His wonders to perform,” and it will be a happy day in your life and mine when we can completely rest in Jesus. We will enjoy perfect peace (Isaiah 26:3) when we rest in Him. In recent years, many of us wondered, many of us wept, when certain political victories were won in this great country of ours but we must remember that God could have prevented it, for He is sovereign. But He allowed it, and in the by-and-by we will understand why.

That does not mean we are compromisers, nor does it mean that we are not to continue to fight the fight of faith. We are to be good soldiers even if it costs us our heads; but when the enemies of God have seemingly won a victory, we must always remember that Romans 8:28 is still in the Bible, and there is no power except of God. Even the devil could have no power at all unless God permitted him the power that he exercises. God works unseen, but nevertheless He works . . . yes, even in our political, educational, and religious set-up of this day. You may rest assured that If God be for us, “who can be against us?” The little flock will be victorious over the hordes of the enemies of Jesus Christ in the final consummation of all things.

Here God uses ten kings and their leader to destroy the enemies of righteousness; and later, the Beast and the kings will meet the same fate. God has a blueprint (Acts 15:13-18). **“Known unto God are all His works from the beginning,”** and He will follow His divine plan.

When all things are finished, He will look upon them and say, **“IT IS GOOD!”**

ROME: THE SEAT, THE CENTER, OF THE WOMAN’S AUTHORITY

Verse 18: **“And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.”**

Babylon means *“confusion,”* and is used symbolically many times by the prophets (Isaiah 13:1). Study this portion carefully. Here in Revelation we are to distinguish two Babylons.

First, Ecclesiastical Babylon, which is apostate Christendom and will be headed up under Rome. Second, Political Babylon, which is the empire of the Beast and his satellites.

This will be the last form of Gentile world dominion. In Daniel we read of the beginning of the times of the Gentiles. When the Beast and the ten kings are destroyed, that will be the end of the Gentile domain.

In our present chapter, Ecclesiastical Babylon is referred to as **“the great whore,”** and at that time will be the one object of worship. Study II Thessalonians 2:3-4 and Revelation 13:15. The power of Political Babylon will be destroyed when the Lord returns in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God.

In verse 18 we learn that Rome, the city built on seven hills, is the home of Babylon, and the place where, in the future, the systems of Babylon will be fully developed and finally destroyed. History substantiates the fact that Rome has produced the most blasphemous doctrines ever taught. After the Rapture there will be a fuller development of Romish error and apostasy; therefore, we know that Rome is the city here referred to. The woman is not Rome alone, but the systems which have their seat and home base in Rome. The Romish system will be the delegate of the devil in religious corruption and putrefaction in the end of the ages (Revelation 16:19). From Rome her power will be demonstrated against the peoples of Christendom.

I readily confess that chapters 17 and 18 are the two hardest chapters in Revelation for me. Let us sum up what we have studied in chapter 17:

Babylon is briefly referred to in Revelation 14:8 and in Revelation 16:19. In chapters 17 and 18 we have a fully detailed description of the character and the doom of Babylon; but there is another subject of judgment besides that of Babylon: The Beast.

This tremendous apostate secular power occupies a very important and outstanding place in this prophecy. The two main subjects in chapters 17 and 18 are Babylon (the religious system), and the Beast (the civil apostate power energized by Satan himself).

The former occupies the chief place in this chapter; the Beast is more prominent in chapter 13, but here is regarded as secondary, having to do with Babylon the harlot. In the outset of chapter 17 the harlot is the powerful one.

Chapter 17 is divided into two parts:

First, John saw a vision (verses 1-6); and second, he gives to us the interpretation of that vision (verses 7-18). The interpretation goes much further than what is seen in the vision. The same principle is discussed in Daniel 2 and in Matthew 13. The interpretation adds instruction to that found in the dream of Daniel 2 or the parable in Matthew 13.

John first beheld the great whore, ripe for judgment (verse 1). She is called “**Babylon the Great,**” because of the widespread and horrible confusion of which she is the head. She is also “**the great whore**” because of the hypocritical and frightful system she holds over the souls and bodies of men. Her terrible character is described by the word “**whore.**” She is called a woman because the term “**woman**” implies subjection (I Corinthians 11:3), and this harlot sets herself up as the bride of Christ - or, as the Church, the true Bride. She is definitely a counterfeit; the true Bride is described in Ephesians 5:23-25.

In the case of this woman, her every move is hypocritical, diabolical, intended to lead men to destruction. Jesus, the true head of the Church, came to SAVE men, and His Church is made up of holy, righteous, spotless born again believers.

This woman cares nothing for Christ, nor will she bow to His headship nor to His authority. She is one hundred percent diabolical in her hypocrisy. The whore sits upon “**many waters**” (verse 1). These many waters signify many peoples . . . multitudes of peoples (verse 15). The woman will cast a spell over these multitudes, luring them to everlasting ruin and destruction.

Keep in mind that the devil is making his last drive against the God of gods, Lord of lords, and the King of kings. He is using a woman here to do it.

The kings and inhabitants of the earth are deceived by the woman and are drawn to her. From this we gather that her influence will be universal, and that the whole world will have direct connection with the whore. “**The kings of the earth**” are not the same as the ten kings in verse 12. The ten kings will have to do only with the Roman Empire . . . the civil power of the day; but the kings of the earth signify the whole world. We can understand why liberals and modernists are crying today for a world church. After the Rapture, there will be a world church, and the woman will be the head of it.

The woman is seen sitting upon a “**scarlet beast.**” This is the same beast with the same power seen in chapter 13. The ancient Roman Empire which has been defunct for many centuries is here witnessed by John on the scene of prophecy covered with the glory and government of the entire world, and this will be fulfilled after the Rapture. The Roman Empire will again control the world, and all roads will once more lead to Rome!

The woman is arrayed in scarlet. In Revelation 12:3 the dragon bears the same color. Man has always sought eagerly after the pomp and glory of this world. The imperial power in that day will be subject to the woman. The Beast to whom the dragon commits universal authority and his own diabolical power is servant to and tool of the woman. In the beginning of her reign, the secular power (the secular Beast and his ten puppets) will support her.

The Beast upon which the woman sat is further described as “**full of the names of blasphemy.**” It is the Beast who is described as full of the names of blasphemy.

As despicable as the woman is, she is not guilty of daring and open blasphemy. Deceit, corruption, violence, pride and evils beyond description are ascribed to Ecclesiastical Babylon - the whore; but blasphemy and the public denial of Almighty God and His Christ are not acts of the woman; these are acts of the Beast upon which she rides. The names of blasphemy on the heads of the Beast in Revelation 13:1 point out the executive governing authority with this awful character of guilt and blasphemy. The fear of God is completely gone.

The empire in all its parts is wholly given up to the most horrible iniquity and blasphemy man could ever conceive.

When the Beast comes on the scene of action (Revelation 13) he is said to have “**seven heads and ten horns.**” This term is repeated several times. The mention of the Beast in Revelation 13:1 is in similar terms to that of the mention of the dragon in Revelation 12:3.

In the case of the dragon, his heads - not his horns - are crowned. In the case of the Beast (in Revelation 13:1) the horns are crowned, but the heads bear the names of blasphemy. However, in chapter 17, neither the heads nor the horns are crowned (Revelation 17:3). Such, then, is the general character and description of the Beast who will be the main supporter of the false, corrupt religious systems dominating the empire that will come into world-wide power after the Rapture, and the head (or seat) of that government will be in Rome, while the influence of the empire will permeate the whole wide world.

It seems strange that the Beast on which such great power is conferred by Satan (Revelation 13:4-7) should be willing to allow himself to be used of the woman; but her dazzling splendor and seductive influence will be as the glistening of the shining serpent who came to Eve in the Garden, and even this giant power who will be at the head of the civil world government will bow at the feet of the harlot for a season.

The woman is clothed in splendor, adorned with all that the world values (verse 4). She holds a golden cup in her hand, and that cup is full of abominations and the unclean things of her fornication. All the people of earth who drink of her cup (and multiplied millions will) will be morally ruined. Upon her forehead we see stamped, in clear view of all, her name and character: “**Mystery**” of iniquity.

The second part of her title: “**Babylon the Great.**” This speaks of the havoc she will play with the peoples of earth in that day of her glory. She will fill Christendom with innumerable evils and with hopeless confusion.

This has been true ever since Rome (Babylon) came into existence almost sixteen centuries ago, but after the Rapture she will bring in such confusion as the world has never known.

There is a third part to the title of the woman: “**The mother of harlots and abominations of the earth.**” Every hellish system which copies the ways of the woman - every system which accepts her doctrines, including the Romish system - makes up Babylon. Babylon means confusion; the Romish system has always been confusion.

This woman is the mother, the source, of every evil religious system. There is only one true religion, and that is Christianity, purchased at the tremendous price of the Blood of Jesus. Every religious system that does not bow in total submission to the Blood and the finished work of Jesus is a part of the systems of Babylon.

This woman is the head of a bloody system. “**I saw the woman drunken with the Blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus**” (verse 6). In case you have any doubt as to what system has shed enough blood to intoxicate to the point of drunkenness, you read *Foxe's Book of Christian Martyrs*. If you have not read this tremendous book, you should read it; you will learn some things that will make your blood run cold in your veins! If you cannot find a copy in your city, if you will write to us we will happily give you information as to how you may obtain a copy. Every believer - especially now - should read it.

This woman is drunk with blood. She professes to be the spouse of Christ; and yet she has murdered the saints and the prophets - the witnesses of Jesus Christ who were redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb.

During the first part of the Tribulation period there will be a great number saved whom the spirit of Babylon will butcher. The Beast is the one who will actually put the saints to death during the time of the woman's glory, but she is the power behind the Beast at that time. “**And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations**” (Revelation 13:7). This refers to the first Beast - the revived Roman Empire - and the power is given by the second Beast, which is the ecclesiastical dictator in the end time. The woman is the final bloody, deplorable picture of this ecclesiastical power.

In the second part of chapter 17, the mystery of the woman and of the Beast who carries her, is explained for us. I praise God that the Holy Spirit gave us the last half of this chapter. This mystery is double - the woman and the Beast. I made the statement earlier in our study that for everything God has that is good, the devil has a cheap counterfeit.

We read concerning the true Church, “**the mystery concerning Christ and the Church**” which has to do with Christ (the head) and the born again believers (the Bride) of the true Church. But here we read concerning the mystery of the woman and the Beast which carries her. In the true Church, Christ is mentioned first as the head, and we, the members of His body, are mentioned second; but in our present Scripture the woman is mentioned first, and the Beast carries her.

This is the counterfeit. Jesus is the True . . . and the Truth: “**Ye shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free.**” Those who follow the woman are led into captivity and destruction.

The mystery of the Beast is explained first (verse 8).

“**The beast that thou sawest was, and is not.**” The Beast, therefore, existed as one vast empire under a long line of imperial rulers. “ . . . **and is not.**” At the time John saw the vision and penned down this prophetic truth, the Beast has no political existence. The countries and nations once within the empire, remain; but the empire as a glorious power ended in A. D. 476. Rome crumbled and that ancient empire of world-wide fame for many centuries ceased to exist, although parts of it have never ceased to be. This Beast “**shall ascend out of the bottomless pit**” (verse 8).

Many years after I was converted, I could not understand why great Bible teachers taught that the Roman Empire would be revived, and at the same time taught that the coming of the Lord Jesus is imminent. I learned in my early Christian experience that Jesus can come at any moment; no man knows the day nor the hour.

Then I asked myself, “How could the Roman Empire be revived?” The truth of the matter is, the Roman Empire exists today in broken parts. The countries and territories that composed the old Roman Empire are still there, and the spirit of the people in most of those places would be very happy to accept a world dictator.

The Empire will not be revived until after the Rapture. (Nothing needs to take place before the Rapture. Jesus can come at any second. There is not one word of Scripture that needs yet to be fulfilled before Jesus comes.) But before He comes in the Revelation to destroy ecclesiastical and political corruption, the Roman Empire must and WILL be revived. The Beast will be the head, the ten king will be his puppets, and their territory will make up the giant empire of Rome again. All the world will wonder at this gigantic Beast - except the elect (Revelation 17:8), who will understand.

At the end of his bloody reign, he “**will go into perdition.**” This describes the everlasting doom of the Beast (Revelation 19:20). He will be cast alive into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the Beast and the False Prophet are. So the Satanic trinity will be placed in the lake of fire and brimstone (chapter 20).

The seven heads are seven mountains. These mountains refer to the hills on which Rome is built. The seven kings signify various forms of government of the Roman Empire. These heads are seven kings, five of which had fallen. Some Bible scholars consider the reference to point to the first five emperors of Rome (Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius and Nero).

After John mentions the five fallen phases of civil and political government, he continues by saying, “. . . **and one IS.**” (That is the imperial form of government that existed in John’s day - the sixth head.) However, another “**is yet to come . . . the seventh.**” The seventh one will continue for a brief season.

“AND THE BEAST THAT WAS . . . AND IS NOT . . . EVEN HE IS THE EIGHTH, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition” (Revelation 17:11). And the eighth, which is of the seven and goeth into perdition, is the man who heads the empire - the Antichrist, the little horn of Daniel chapter 7. That will be Satan’s man who will arise out of the abyss.

Next we have the ten horns of the Beast (verse 12).

The ten horns are kings who come within the scope of the kingdom of the Beast. The duration of his reign will determine the duration of their reign. They all have one mind, one purpose and one heart. They yield themselves wholeheartedly and unreservedly into the hands of the Beast . . . they are at his service (verse 13).

The Lamb of God then appears and declares war.

The Beast, the ten kings and their armies are on one side; the Lamb of God and the mighty host of Heaven are on the other side (verse 14). This is the war described in Revelation 19:11-21. In chapter 17 the last act of the Beast and his ungodly associates has not actually come. It is seen by John, but it does not happen until Revelation 19:11-21. There are other events that transpire between the account given here and the actual battle.

There is no guesswork concerning the outcome. The King of kings will be victorious and the Beast with his henchmen will be put down.

The waters John saw, upon which the woman sat, signify multitudes of people, nations, tongues (verse 15).

The tremendous moral influence of the woman extended far beyond the Palestine area . . . it reached the ends of the earth. The masses of mankind were organized and brought under her influence. The **“many waters”** in verse 1 become evangelists of the woman, and lead untold multitudes to follow her. The ten horns (kings) finally turn against her whom they have supported, worshipped, and bowed down to. The Beast and the ten kings then destroy the woman. They reduce her to a state of complete desolation, and they confiscate her wealth.

“The love of money is the root of all evil,” and the glory of things seen has been the damnation of millions - and will be until the consummation of all things.

In verse 17 we see God’s will and God’s words carried out. The ten kings unite with the Beast, who is the real authority, and together they destroy the systems of Rome . . . the scarlet woman with all of her despicable doctrines and practices.

Verse 18 clearly points out the city where all these horrible things will originate - the city from which they will spread to the ends of the earth, and from which final judgment will be poured out and multitudes will be destroyed when the Lamb of God leads the armies of Heaven against earth’s ungodly reprobates.

Chapters 17 and 18 describe the harlot of Satan.

Chapter 19 through the remainder of the book has to do with the Bride and the future home of the Lamb, the Bride, and the peoples of earth who were not deceived by the counterfeit Christ and the Beast.

~ end of chapter 17 ~

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